

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims Status

Claims 1-4 and 6-8 are pending. Claims 1-4 are withdrawn pursuant to a previous Restriction Requirement. Claims 5 and 9-13 are canceled without prejudice. Claims 6-8 are amended for grammatical purposes to improve readability. Claims 6 and 7 are also amended to include the subject matter of the claims from which they depend; therefore, rendering these claims independent. No new matter is believed to have been added.

Claim Objections

Claims 5-13 are objected to for being dependent on withdrawn claims. The pending elected claims (i.e., claims 6-8) have been rewritten such that reference to withdrawn claims has been removed. Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of these objections.

§103(a) Rejections

A. Rejection over *Ida*

Claims 5, 7 and 9-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious in view of *Ida* (US 4,839,125). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

With respect to claim 7, the Office asserts that “*Ida* teaches the gaskets are on the belt and the belt is 800 mm in width (column 6, line 22), therefore the gaskets regulate the thickness variation of the material to less than 1 meter” (Office Action, page 4). However, such a “belt width” of *Ida* is not equivalent to Applicants’ claimed thickness variation. The 800 mm value of *Ida* is a length value in the width direction of the belt (i.e., perpendicular to the belt running direction). In contrast, Applicants claims “a variation width of 1 m or less *along the belt running direction*” (emphasis added).

For ease of discussion of these spatial parameters, Applicants refer to Figure 3 of the current specification. Applicants note that positions A1 and A2 are controlled such that those

positions are not moved more than 1 meter *along the belt running direction* (see also discussion of Figure 3 in the specification: page 19, line 6, to page 20, line 1).

Accordingly, *Ida* is silent with respect to the claimed “variation width … along the belt running direction.” Therefore, as *Ida* cannot suggest that which it is silent on, the Office has failed to meet its burden of proof of a *prima facie* case of obviousness with respect to claim 7.

Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of this rejection.

B. Rejection over the combination of *Ida* and *Nishi*

Claims 6 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious in view of the combination of *Ida* (US 4,839,125) and *Nishi* (JP 06-278148). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

At the outset, Applicants note that the arguments above (see A) with respect to the claimed “variation width … along the belt running direction” apply to claim 8. Therefore, *Ida* fails to disclose or suggest such a limitation.

In addition, the Office has recognized that “*Ida* does not explicitly teach a laser beam emitter [at] the sides of the belt and reflecting the laser to regulate the variation width” (Office Action, page 5). Consequently, the Office relies on *Nishi* to fulfill this deficiency of *Ida*. As such, the Office asserts that “*Nishi* teaches monitoring and regulating dimensions in a plate/board production process using a laser emitting device (paragraph 0020)” (Id.).

In contrast to the Office’s assertions, Applicants submit that *Nishi* is silent with respect to “a laser beam emitter provided on the side of a raw material feeding part” and “laser ray is emitted from the laser beam emitter along the belt running direction” as claimed (see claim 6). More specifically, Applicants submit that *Nishi* fails to disclose or suggest the direction of the laser ray and the position of the emitter for the following reasons.

In referring to Figure 11 of *Nishi* for guidance in the interpretation of paragraph [0020] as cited by the Office, one can see that the emitter (semiconductor laser) and the detector (PSD) are set near each other and are above the inspection object. Applicants note that this is a typical set-up for one-belt systems as is the case for *Nishi* (see Figure 1).

In contrast, the positioning and directioning of *Nishi* can not be successfully applied to the claimed invention due to the claimed invention using “two endless belts configured such that their facing belt surfaces run toward the same direction … and continuous gaskets running under condition of being sandwiched by belt surfaces at their both side edge portions” (see claim 6). This is better understood upon review of Figure 4 of the current specification.

Figure 4 shows positions A1 and A2 wherein these positions are gasket reaching positions in which the polymerizable raw material first reaches the gaskets. The area near the positions A1 and A2 are surrounded by the lower endless belt 1', upper main pulley 2 and the gaskets 7. Therefore, the positioning of the emitter and detector as shown in *Nishi* can not be applied successfully to the claimed apparatus as shown in Figure 4.

In contrast to *Nishi*, in the claimed invention the laser beam emitter is provided on the side of the raw material feeding part and laser ray is emitted from the laser beam emitter along the belt running direction. Furthermore, the reflection light vertical to the belt running direction can be easily confirmed (visually) by an operator situated at the side surface of the apparatus. In addition, movement of the positions A1 and A2 can be monitored with improved precision. As *Nishi* does not deal with a two-belt system as claimed, the positioning and directioning of *Nishi* neither discloses nor suggests such easy visual confirmation or improved monitoring precision of the positions movement as obtained by the claimed invention. Accordingly, *Nishi* does not disclose or suggest the claimed invention.

Therefore, as neither *Ida* nor *Nishi* alone disclose or suggest “a laser beam emitter provided on the side of a raw material feeding part” and/or “laser ray is emitted from the laser beam emitter along the belt running direction” as claimed, the combination of *Ida* and *Nishi* also does not disclose or suggest such claimed features.

Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of this rejection.

C. Rejection over the combination of *Ida* and *Kato*

Claims 12 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious in view of the combination of *Ida* (US 4,839,125) and *Kato* (US 3,988,098). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As claims 12 and 13 have been canceled, this rejection is believed to have been rendered moot. Applicants make no statement with respect to the propriety of this ground of rejection and in no way acquiesce to the same. Solely to expedite examination, Applicants have canceled claims 12 and 13. As such, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

Conclusion

Applicants submit that all now-pending claims are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the rejections and passage of this case to issue.

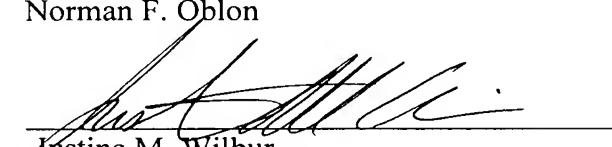
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